STATEMENT OF
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NATIONAL EMERGENCY NUMBER ASSOCIATION (NENA)

Before the,
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Congressional Rural Caucus Co-chairs and Members, thank you very much for providing the 9-1-1 community the opportunity to appear before you today. My name is Stephen Seitz and I'm Director of Government Affairs for the National Emergency Number Association (NENA), an organization consisting of public officials, fire, EMS, law enforcement, equipment and service providing vendors of the 9-1-1 community. On a personal note, it's a distinct honor for me to testify before the Rural Caucus, as my mother has served rural America for over 25 years as both an Agent and Director of the Cooperative Extension Service at Michigan State University.

Today I am appearing before the Caucus on behalf of NENA, but recognize that 9-1-1 is truly a partnership with roles and responsibilities of many who must continue to find ways to get the job done regardless of the technical obstacles or challenges of modern communications.

Before I share the national story of 9-1-1 in rural America it's important that I recognize the Congressional leadership of the Congressional E9-1-1 Caucus Co-chairs, Senators Burns and Clinton, as well as Representatives Shimkus and Eshoo who successfully passed the ENHANCE 911 Act of 2004, helping improve the roadmap for ubiquitous 9-1-1 service by creating a Joint National 911 Program Office and grant program within the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). The 9-1-1 community thanks all the Members of the Congressional E9-1-1 Caucus for their tireless efforts in supporting improved emergency communications throughout the nation. In speaking to the national leadership I would also like to recognize the leadership of Transportation Secretary, Norman Mineta and outgoing Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman, Michael Powell both who have personally lead efforts within the Department, Commission and the Administration to raise the priority of 9-1-1 service from any technology everywhere.

Opening Comments

We applaud the leadership of the Rural Caucus in bringing the 9-1-1 community to the table for these vital discussions about the future of our nation's communications capabilities, services, and systems in the rewrite of the 1996 Telecommunications Act. The future is now. We at NENA have dubbed our communications future generically under the moniker "Next Generation E9-1-1" or NG E9-1-1 for short. Each and every day new technologies and systems are being made available to Americans with exciting communications possibilities. The idea of better, faster, cheaper technology and

communications service is vital to all American consumers, but it may prove even more vital for our public safety and security. We at NENA and within the broader 9-1-1 community are looking to embrace next generation technologies for both the 9-1-1 call centers Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) as well as the public's ability to call 9-1-1 and share information in real time.

However, with our excitement of next generation technologies comes equal concern. If the past is any indication, public safety services and access will be woefully neglected unless we pursue an aggressive agenda that includes early technical review and service planning within free-market development and consumer choice. This notion is especially true for rural America.

In my statement today, I will refer to our vision, our needs and respectfully make observations as Congress begins to grapple with the rewrite of the Telecommunications Act of 1996. Through out my statement, I will emphasize fundamental points for NENA, 9-1-1 and next generation capabilities that have the potential to dramatically improve our nation's 9-1-1 service.

9-1-1 in Rural America

In speaking to 9-1-1 in rural America, I'm going to take the liberty of using a term popularized in our community by the founder of the Congressional E9-1-1 Caucus, Senator Conrad Burns by saying, "There is a lot of dirt between light bulbs." Well in the 9-1-1 business, we have the same amount of dirt only this time its copper and in some

instances it is tin cans and string. Reviewing 9-1-1 in rural America, I will illustrate examples and emphasize four points for consideration in the rewrite of the 1996 Telecommunications Act:

First, 9-1-1 must be universal. Since 1968, Americans have increasingly relied on 9-1-1 to contact local police, fire and paramedic services when they need help. 9-1-1 is the universal emergency number and the public expects it. Whether it's a traditional landline call, mobile user or voice over internet application, a 9-1-1 call is of the highest priority and should be treated as such, it takes a commitment from the public and private sector.

Second, we need more than just a call, we need information. The vast majority of 9-1-1 calls are in fact, "Enhanced 9-1-1" (E9-1-1) calls, by which the call is selectively routed to the proper PSAP for the caller's location, by which the PSAP has equipment and database information that displays the caller's phone number and address to the call taker. E9-1-1 information is vital for all calls, wireline, wireless and internet. Modern systems may revolutionize the availability of additional E9-1-1 information including video, text and data.

Third, 9-1-1 requires a significant funding commitment. In spite of public appearances and the name brand of 9-1-1, present cost recovery revenues and the needs of next generation technologies and challenges are not being met without long term financial stability and continuity.

Fourth, 9-1-1 is the poor sister of the technology revolution. As Congress looks to rewrite the Telecommunications Act of 1996 there is an opportunity for a new 9-1-1 paradigm.

Universal Access

Today there are approximately 150 counties that don't have even the most basic of 9-1-1 service. As I share that number I need to be clear and explain what that means as the FCC has been direct in that the numbers "9-1-1" are to remain open across communications networks for emergency calling capabilities. Essentially the aforementioned 150 counties are without an organized approach to deliver 9-1-1 services. That is, they can forward 9-1-1 calls to other response agencies, but lack the basic approach to connect and receive a 9-1-1 call to a PSAP. This means that under the guidelines of the Wireless Public Safety Act of 1999 and the requirements of the 1996 Telecommunications Act, Independent Local Exchange Carriers (ILEC's) have had to literally go out and find a specific alternative PSAP to direct calls, leaving choice of emergency response in the hands of a telephone company. While the number of communities in this situation is limited, it's an important illustration of the lack of central 9-1-1 coordination, especially in rural America.

There is a long and proud history in our nation in providing access to communications services. Congress can provide even greater leadership by appropriating monies for the recently passed ENHANCE 911 Act of 2004, to ensure greater national coordination and 9-1-1 problem solving. Supporting the goals of the ENHANCE 911 Act of 2004, rural development programs and agencies such as Rural Utilities Service and Rural Electrification Act can and should make E9-1-1 a priority. Additionally telecommunications providers in search of Eligible Telecommunications Carrier' (ETC) status in order to receive 'Universal Service', should have a condition that they must

support deploying E9-1-1 capabilities and technologies. This would not only help rural PSAPs and governments, but also be more consistent with matching requirements of many federal homeland security grants. 9-1-1 is the most basic of all homeland security capabilities and priorities we must support universal access for all Americans.

Enhanced 9-1-1

Current landline E9-1-1 technologies have been around for 25 or more years. Today 93% of the counties with 9-1-1 coverage have enhanced 9-1-1 for callers from landline services. That is the PSAP has the database equipment as well as capability to receive selective routed information including the caller's location and call back number. The modern standard of wireline service, E9-1-1 is an important distinction in service. Providing our citizens with easy access to police, fire and paramedic services through an E9-1-1 system is a guiding principle of NENA and tenet of the 9-1-1 community.

Supporting that principle and over 10 years in the making is the ability for PSAPs to receive wireless E9-1-1 calls. Commonly referred to as Phase II, wireless E9-1-1 allows call takers to receive both the caller's wireless phone number and their location information as the call is routed based on the cell site/sector information or on the caller location information, which is plotted in x and y latitude and longitude coordinates. Of the 6,166 primary and secondary PSAPs, based on NENA's preliminary assessment of the most recent FCC quarterly filings and reported through NENA's United States Department of Transportation Wireless Implementation Project, at least 40% of the nation's PSAPs have Phase II from at least one carrier. Close examination and review of

these figures points to a tremendous discrepancy between America's rural communities and urban centers. This is a tragedy as consumers living in rural areas deserve the same level E9-1-1 service as those in urban and suburban areas. The need for accurate emergency information, especially information that includes the location of a caller in rural emergencies is equally, if not more important in rural America than more populated locations and regions.

The recent history of wireless E9-1-1 has demonstrated all too often how our 9-1-1 system can become easily strained by new technology. 9-1-1 in rural America has in far too many circumstances been an afterthought. This can not be repeated.

In August, 2003 NENA began aggressive Internet Protocol (IP) development efforts. The result was the NENA – VON Coalition agreement, and serves as the first of many steps forward to consensus development; to both guide the initial efforts of Voice Over Internet (VOI) providers in handling 9-1-1 calls, and to gain agreement in an active role in the development of migratory and longer term IP and VOI solutions for E9-1-1. With the unique characteristics of rural America including terrain, accessibility distance from response and in some cases market limitations IP could help 9-1-1 leapfrog previous challenges and obstacles of E9-1-1 deployment.

VOI brings a unique set of challenges to the delivery of location service for 9-1-1. To be effective and meaningful, E9-1-1 must work with a wide range of VOI and IP-enabled products and services. This includes both voice and data, whether serving a fixed

location, or nomadic locations that may change from day to day, or operating wirelessly in a much greater area (including roaming from area to area), during a single call.

Long-term solutions are needed to accommodate all the IP variances. To do that, it is essential that government and industry support goal-oriented work, with appropriate technical experts and 9-1-1 operational professionals in an open standard and architecture environment. This is a tremendous undertaking which can not be marginalized by larger policy discussions or debates.

The technical development of 9-1-1 must be convergent with its policy direction. In far too many circumstances today's regulations for 9-1-1 are fragmented, consisting of a jurisdictional patchwork of rules for various types of communications, providers and stakeholders Wireline issues are regulated by states. Wireless issues are regulated by the FCC. 9-1-1 Public Safety Answering Points are often local. Consumer expectations are national. VOI can be international.

I should note that VOI applications are only a portion of the E9-1-1 and IP landscape. There will likely be VOI applications that need to support 9-1-1 calls terminating at the 9-1-1 PSAP without ever touching the Public Switched Telephone Network. Legislative definitions must allow for treatment of the full extent of options for IP and E9-1-1 as the future unfolds.

In regards to the Telecommunications rewrite, 9-1-1 needs to be treated as an integrated public safety service with E9-1-1 as the fundamental building block for our safety and national security.

Funding 9-1-1

E9-1-1 services are not free. Most states require wireless and wireline carriers to collect a small 9-1-1 fee on phone bills. Receipts are placed into public funds that are supposed to be invested in improved 9-1-1 services. In far too many circumstance these monies are not making their way to 9-1-1. Broadly there is no national funding coordination to ensure that our nation's 9-1-1 service is the most update and reliable for our complex needs. Today's biggest loser in the current 9-1-1 funding system is rural America where communities can not meet even the most basic of 9-1-1 needs.

Migrating to new technologies, the public safety community is extremely concerned by the immediate and growing impact of VOI on loss of conventional service fees and surcharge revenue, and the uncertainty of any requirement to replace that critical operational funding stream in the VOI environment. Until a clear solution is identified for this immediate public safety funding problem, attention to the need for technological change and evolution of the E9-1-1 system itself is difficult to achieve.

Yet both must be solved, at the national, state, and local level, in order to realize the ability to bring new technologies into E9-1-1 service easily and quickly upon their appearance on the consumer front, and with less overall cost.

New 9-1-1 Paradigm

Since its inception, the 9-1-1 system has been THE first responder in times of individual and mass emergencies. Every day, Americans call 9-1-1 at the time of their greatest need. Today we are averaging over 200 million 9-1-1 calls per year. For the caller and the public, the successful completion of a 9-1-1 call can mean the difference between danger and security, injury and recovery, or life and death. The ability to call for help in times of an emergency is not 'voluntary' – it's mandatory.

We must set our standards high for achieving access to emergency assistance for all users. We must retain and improve 9-1-1 features and functions established and in use for the safety of the public.

Today we are faced with an aging 9-1-1 network in an era when the public demand for cutting-edge communications tools reaches from the schoolhouse to the home, to work throughout the community. While the nation's 9-1-1 service providers struggle with deploying location technology for wireless telephone sets, some parts of the country do not even have basic 9-1-1. As segments of our community rely more on two-way messaging devices, automatic crash notification service, internet telephony etc., NENA recognizes that the 9-1-1 system must be modernized to accommodate emerging technologies and interconnected to accommodate the transfer of digital information across the country.

We cannot support the further fragmentation of 9-1-1. We recognize that consumer expectations for 9-1-1 are national and therefore require leadership and resources from all parties involved in 9-1-1. To this end, NENA, the only organization dedicated solely to the study, advancement, and implementation of 9-1-1, is convening national roundtables to build a public policy, technical, operational and educational blueprint and framework for the advancement of 'Next Generation E9-1-1" (NG E9-1-1) capabilities.

By supporting NG E9-1-1 service capabilities, NENA is establishing a new vision for 9-1-1 that supports flexible open architecture systems while retaining the security that is needed. A vision based on vendor and technology neutral solutions and innovation. A vision built with the consumer in mind – compatible with the ever changing commercial environment – supporting today's service quality and protection expectations. A vision that is cogent in its national, state and local policies for 9-1-1. A vision that sets the standards and requirements needed to support the future of 9-1-1.

As communications systems, devices and regulations have move past the traditional telephone, so too has the technology, tools and resources needed to receive calls of distress. NENA's NG E9-1-1 Program is organized to capture the dialogue of change and help usher in a proactive agenda for a 21st Century 9-1-1 system.

As we address modern systems and needs, we could literally go back and try to fix all the 9-1-1 centers in the nation or we can move forward with a coordinated plan and a new paradigm.

Conclusion

Less than 15 years ago, wireless telephones and broadband connections were not common for the average American consumer. Today's mobile and 'connected' consumer uses a vast array of communications devices and systems that were never thought possible when the nation's 9-1-1 system was developed 37 years ago. After spending years in struggling to deploy wireless E9-1-1, NENA leaders have long advocated for more cogent deployment of new technologies and policies.

Our nation's 9-1-1 system and professionals play a vital role in the provision of emergency services. The availability and effectiveness of our nation's 9-1-1 system is of paramount importance for our homeland security as well as everyday emergency preparedness. In far too many circumstances rural America is woefully behind when it comes to 9-1-1.

This past December, the President signed the ENHANCE 911 Act of 2004. The enacted legislation authorizes the creation of a national 9-1-1 program office and the facilitation of up to $250 million per year for grants to upgrade enhanced emergency communications services. The enacted law also seeks to address further the problem of dedicated state 9-1-1 funds being diverted for other purposes. A needed step, the proof will truly be in the approaches and leadership taken outside the Halls of Congress as monies are appropriated for improved 9-1-1 service and delivery.

9-1-1 should not be an 'afterthought' for communications providers, but rather an active part of service design and development.

On behalf of thousands of NENA members, the 9-1-1 professionals and all involved in supporting their work, I thank you for your support and the opportunity to be here today.

In closing, as Congress looks to rewrite the 1996 Telecommunications Act, NENA reminds the Congressional Rural Caucus that nothing could be more important than the numbers "9-1-1" for every citizen, every device and truly every where.